

University of Groningen

In Defense of Common Sense. Lorenzo Valla's Humanist Critique of Scholastic Philosophy

Nauta, Lodi

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2009

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Nauta, L. (2009). *In Defense of Common Sense. Lorenzo Valla's Humanist Critique of Scholastic Philosophy*. Harvard University Press. <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?recid=29432>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

LODI NAUTA is Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy, University of Groningen, the Netherlands.

I Tatti Studies in Italian Renaissance History

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England
www.hup.harvard.edu

Jacket art: Colantonio, Saint Gerome in his study with the lion. ©Scala/Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali / Art Resource, NY.

“This is by far the best book in any language on Valla as a philosopher. It will immediately take its place on graduate reading lists and in courses on Renaissance humanism and philosophy, and bring Valla into the narrative of Western philosophical history as no book has previously succeeded in doing.”

—JAMES HANKINS,
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

“Tremendously impressive. This is a welcome development in scholarship on Valla. Nauta has written a book that will be consulted for a long time to come.”

—CHRISTOPHER CELENZA,
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY



In Defense
of Common
Sense

In Defense
of Common
Sense

NAUTA



Lorenzo Valla's
Humanist Critique
of Scholastic
Philosophy

LODI NAUTA

One of the leading humanists of Quattrocento Italy, Lorenzo Valla (ca. 1406–1457) has been widely praised as a brilliant and successful debunker of medieval scholastic philosophy. Transcending the disciplinary boundaries that still divide the study of humanism from that of medieval philosophy, Lodi Nauta seeks a more balanced assessment, presenting us with the first comprehensive study of the humanist's attempt at radical reform of Aristotelian scholasticism.

This study first examines Valla's attack on major tenets of Aristotelian metaphysics, showing how Valla employed common sense and linguistic usage as his guides. Next, it explicates Valla's critique of Aristotelian psychology and natural philosophy and discusses his moral and religious views, including Valla's notorious identification of Christian beatitude with Epicurean pleasure and his daring views on the Trinity. Finally, it takes up Valla's humanist dialectic, which rejects the formal approach of the scholastics and seeks to transform logic into a practical tool in which persuasiveness and effectiveness are the prime parameters.

Nauta's work firmly places Valla's arguments and ideas within the contexts of ancient and medieval philosophical traditions as well as renewed interest in ancient rhetoric in the Renaissance. It also amply demonstrates the philosophical relevance of Valla's conviction that, because language is the key to thinking and writing, the philosophical problems of the scholastics are rooted in a misunderstanding of language. Combining philosophical exegesis and historical scholarship, this book offers a new approach to a major Renaissance thinker.